

Press release



Climate Alliance

On the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2014

Frankfurt am Main, 8 August 2014

Peru's progress a step back for indigenous rights

Extractive industry leads to social injustice and destruction of the environment

Peru is a rich country. Rich in natural ecosystems, in incredible biological and cultural diversity, and in natural resources such as gold and silver in the Andean highlands and natural oil and gas in the Amazon region. Rich in people and countless different indigenous peoples. And yet this richness does not lead to the anticipated national progress or to a "good life" for all. Quite the contrary in fact: exploitation of the natural resources leads to social conflicts, to the violation of human and especially indigenous rights, to poverty, and to the destruction of the environment on an huge scale.

Criminal activity in the Andean highlands

Alarming news has reached us from Peru in recent days: Máxima Acuña Chaupe, an indigenous farmer from the northern Andean highlands, has been sentenced to a suspended sentence of almost three years and a fine of 1,000 US dollars this week. But what was her crime?

Máxima lives with her family on her farm on their land near Celendín in Cajamarca Province. The largest gold mine in Latin America, Yanacocha, is also located here. An extension of this is the controversial "Conga" project in the north-east of the country. Both gold and copper will be extracted here in an open-cast mine. The mining company, a consortium comprising Newmont, Buenaventura and the International Finance Corporation (World Bank), has been buying up the surrounding land for years now – in part despite fierce resistance from the rural population, for they lose their livelihoods. Máxima and her family do not want to sell their land. They are therefore threatened and attacked time and time again.

In August 2011, security officials from the mining company attempted to forcibly gain access to their farm with the help of the police. The family was beaten, driven out, and their possessions destroyed. They were accused of not being the rightful owners of the land. Máxima fought dispossession of her land, filed a complaint, and took the case to court.

On 5 August 2014, Máxima, her husband and two other members of her family were found guilty by a court in Celendín. They are accused of illegally occupying land owned by the Yanacocha mine. Her lawyer has launched an appeal.

Criminal activity in the Amazon region

In May and July of this year, a pipeline near the indigenous community of Cuninico in Loreto Province in the Peruvian Amazon region burst. Several square kilometres of rainforest were contaminated. The accident has not officially been confirmed by the national oil company Petroperú, nor has the local population been warned. A number of different Kukama communities dwelling along the Río Marañón and its tributaries are the victims: the water and soil is contaminated, dead fish are floating in the rivers, and animals are dying in the oil. A state of emergency has been called in parts of the

region. The indigenous peoples have received barely any support, and young men are being recruited as day labourers to work without protective clothing to clear the crude oil that has leaked out.

During Climate Alliance's delegation trip to Peru in June 2014 (see Climate Alliance's press release of 12 June 2014), the participants were able to witness the consequences of our consumption of raw materials for themselves first-hand. A meeting with Máxima Chaupe, who shared her story, proved very moving for all. In the Amazon region, the delegation visited the "Dos de Mayo" Kukama community, who reported on the impact of oil exploitation and the latest incidents. The European delegation expressed their solidarity for the protest camp of different indigenous community representatives on a main square in Iquitos. They are calling on the Peruvian government to hear their appeal and to instigate a strategy to resolve the environmental disaster.

Holger Matthäus, Senator for Construction & Environment from the Hanseatic city of Rostock and a member of the Climate Alliance board, who participated in this year's delegation trip, said: "Nowhere are human and environmental rights as inherently linked as they are here for the indigenous peoples. The German government must ensure it consistently adheres to the European standards in implementation of the Peruvian-German agreement on the joint exploitation of natural resources signed in July 2014!"

Human rights and environmental organisations criticise this agreement. The mechanisms for respecting human rights agreed therein are extremely vague. While there are many legal provisions in Peru for the protection of the environment and human rights – Peru is a signatory of Convention No. 169 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO 169), among others agreements – these are not always enforced. The United Nation's motto for this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is thus "Bridging the gap: implementing the rights of indigenous peoples" in recognition of the fact that it is not merely a question of improving the legal framework for indigenous peoples but above all of ensuring that their rights are implemented and enforced. Holger Matthäus: "As an alliance partner for the indigenous peoples, Climate Alliance is on hand to advise as well as to monitor."

Further information:

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[Photos to download:](#)

[Facebook page for the EU project "From Overconsumption to Solidarity"](#) with lots of information on the topic and the delegation trip:

[Blog by Emil Benesch, Climate Alliance Austria](#), on the delegation trip (in German)

[Article by Climate Alliance Luxembourg / ASTM](#) (in German and French)

[Press release by Climate Alliance on the delegation trip](#)

[Further information on Climate Alliance](#)



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